

trauma inflicted on us by those people and the agony we will endure because of them."

Compiled by — Duanita Eleniak,
Director, Sexual Assault Centre,
Edmonton.

NATIVE COURTWORKERS AND SENTENCING

Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) is one of the nine courtworker agencies across Canada providing services to Native people involved with the legal system. NCSA, the oldest and largest courtworker agency, has been active in the criminal justice system and the social service field since 1970. Originally having one courtworker active in the Edmonton municipal (now provincial) court, the agency now has over sixty courtworkers providing services throughout the province in criminal, family, juvenile, and appeal courts.

There is also a host of support programmes, including a Native liaison programme in provincial and federal correctional institutions, two minimum security forestry camps, parole supervision, probation supervision, fine options supervision, a legal education/media programme, parenting skills programmes, youth programmes, and a suicide prevention programme.

Native people appearing in court encounter special problems: language and communication barriers; unfamiliarity with court procedures; inability to pay fines; reluctance to speak up for themselves; lack of knowledge of agencies to turn to for assistance and guidance; confusion about the law; and confusion about Native rights.

Courtworkers assist these people, and the courts, by ensuring that Native people are aware of the charges, possible sentences, and court procedures. Courtworkers also assist clients to get legal representation, refer to appropriate agencies, and provide client support and counselling, and assist in providing interpreters.

The three main roles of the courtworkers in sentencing are: to provide the court with relevant background information on the client; to recommend to the courts sentencing alternatives particularly appropriate to the accused; and to explain sentencing to the accused so that he understands his rights and obligations.

In order to make a fair decision on how to sentence the Native accused, the court needs information on cultural background, general upbringing (living on reserves, in foster homes, in the bush), marital status, dependents, and so on. The courtworker can provide this.

Because the courtworker is familiar with the individual's background and needs, he can recommend alternatives such as alcohol rehabilitation, bush camps, probation, life skills training, or fine options. There is a traditional Native cultural emphasis on community mediation and involvement in the rehabilitation. The courtworker can assist the court in taking advantage of these Native-oriented sentencing alternatives.

An explanation of the sentence to the accused may assist the court by reducing the number of accused defaulting on fines, not carrying out community service orders, or not following probation orders. The courtworkers can explain these without the legal jargon, and perhaps in the Native language.

Not all of the cases, by any means, in which courtworkers are involved are dramatic. Courtworkers remain, though, an important resource to the Native client, and to the court.

Contributed by the Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

THE MAIL BAG

NUTRITION AND ABERRANT BEHAVIOUR

To the editor:

In response to the article "The How and Why of Crime Prevention" by William Nichols: I have corresponded with and met Mr. Nichols since publication, and judge that my response to this article is worthy of consideration of publication . . .

I consider that the subject of nutrition in crime prevention is worthy of more attention than has been given to date by the John Howard Society.

In reference to this subject I have been in continuing correspondence with William Outterbridge of the National Parole Board, and with Mr. Yeomans of the Correctional Service of Canada. Unfortunately to date I have not had much indication that this correspondence . . . has been very productive.

The "bottom line" of this entire subject is that, as stated by Alexander Schauss, it has been proven beyond doubt that even the taking of sugar away from the diet of inmates of corrective institutions does reduce their tendency to criminality, measured by their behaviour, by 48%! This trial has been conducted in institutions where the sugar has been removed with the above-mentioned result, and then replaced in the diet, with a recurrence of the aberrant behaviour, which behaviour was again remedied when the sugar was again removed from the diet.

As Mr. Schauss stated, if the justice system and correction system waits for another five thousand such well controlled tests, before applying this principle to convicted criminals, by that time it will be too late! The evidence is at hand, and I judge that it is seriously incumbent on the public, that is on societies such as the John Howard Society, to see that the impassive justice system and correction system is made cognizant of these facts.

Yours very truly,
Carl J. Reich, M.D., FRCP (C)

Editor's Note: Dr. Reich is a specialist in internal medicine practising in Calgary and Edmonton.

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The "How and Why" of this entire subject is that, as stated by Alexander Schabas, it has been proven beyond doubt that when the taking of sugar away from the diet of inmates of correctional institutions does reduce their tendency to criminality, measured by their behaviour, it is not this that has been conducted in institutions where the sugar has been removed with the above mentioned trials, and then replaced in the diet, with a replacement of aberrant behaviour, which behaviour was again reversed when the sugar was again removed.

It is, however, productive. The "How and Why" of this entire subject is that, as stated by Alexander Schabas, it has been proven beyond doubt that when the taking of sugar away from the diet of inmates of correctional institutions does reduce their tendency to criminality, measured by their behaviour, it is not this that has been conducted in institutions where the sugar has been removed with the above mentioned trials, and then replaced in the diet, with a replacement of aberrant behaviour, which behaviour was again reversed when the sugar was again removed.

Yours very truly,
Carl J. Reich, M.D., FRCP (C)
Editor's Note: Dr. Reich is a specialist in internal medicine practising in Calgary and Edmonton.

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